ILDEGERTE,

QUEEN OF NORWAY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

FROM THE GERMAN OF

AUGUSTUS VON KOTZEBUE,

AUTHOR OF THE STRANGER.

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ILDEGERTE,

QUEEN OF NORWAY.

OH how bliſsful are the firſt enjoyments of pure love! how celeſtial the tranſports of rewarded fidelity! The heart, (which even in the intoxication of gratified ambition, ſtill creates new wiſhes) calmly ſinks to reſt, ſeeming as if it could never feel another want, and as if the whim of fickle Fortune had bound with garlands each deceitful ball which paſſes over us. Rapturous viſion! To the feeling mortal life derives its only

charm from thy deluſive richly-coloured images. And ſure 'tis in our power to prolong this ſweet illuſion till almighty Death ſhall lead us from the arms of love to thoſe ſublimer joys, of which that we may be partakers, our Creator will beſtow upon us finer organs. Yes 'tis in our power; but heaven-born wiſdom only can convert the cloying ſameneſs of the embrace to a clear ſtream of ever-flowing bliſs. He who has devoted the day to his duties and the goddeſs Wiſdom, will every evening find happineſs in the arms of his wife, and Love with bounteous hand will ſhed upon him from his horn unfaded flowers. But this ſoft harmony of ſouls will not be found in buſtling courts and ſplendid palaces. There all is diſſipation; even love is diſſipation; not the mild and grateful hour, which re-animates

re-animates the faculties for Wiſdom's ſervice.

The firſt weeks that followed the ſolemnization of the nuptials flew upon the wings of Joy to the abode of Love, there to announce the happineſs and gratitude of the young couple. Banquets, tournaments, and feſtive dances had their daily turn. From far and near haſtened the flower of Knighthood to the gay metropolis. All crowded to the throne of the fair Queen, and he, who had but once ſeen Ildegerte ſmile, returned contented to his home, feaſting on the fond anticipation of relating to his grand-children the happy times of his youth. What a lovely being! what a faſcinating ſweetneſs animated every word and look of the young Queen! There was not a heart

which ſhe did not ſubdue. When ſome talkative old man deſcribed to her the length and breadth of his whole life (intereſting to him alone), when, as he ſpoke, his youthful fire once more inſpired him, and ſparkled in his ſunken eye, Ildegerte liſtened with modeſt attention and without interruption, as if the relation contained all that was amuſing and inſtructive. The old man departed, extolling her—"The Queen is an excellent woman; ſhe reveres old age."

When ſome old Knight's good wife, bleſſed by Heaven with more children than underſtanding, ſat at her ſide, yawning and lending only half an ear to the recital of battles and atchievements, Ildegerte ſoon knew how to looſe her tongue. She aſked after her ſons and daughters, received inſtructions in houſehold

houſehold management, and in idea viſited the kitchen. The wife, well pleaſed, returned at evening to her huſband, and exclaimed—

"Our Queen is an excellent woman, mindful of what ſhe was, and what ſhe is!"

When the young jocund couples ſkimmed through the mazy dance, and, forgetting amid their pleaſure the etiquette of Court, made the air tremble with their exclamations, Ildegerte joined them, and far from correcting their playful pleaſantry by regal pomp, ſhe left a leſſon to one of the beſt of princes, who in later years ſucceeded to the crown of Denmark (1), that one may ſometimes deſcend from the throne, and enjoy a ſcene of momentary deception, which ſeems to recal the golden age of Saturn.—

The young couples retired, loudly and unanimouſly declaring—

" Our Queen is an excellent woman; ſhe ſoftens the grandeur of the crown!"

None of her perfections eſcaped the watchful eye of Theodoric. He roſe each morning with an ardent wiſh for evening, which was again to bring him to her arms. None of her charms eſcaped the jealous eye of Harold. He threw himſelf each evening on his couch more out of humour, and greeted each morning with a freſh curſe. Whether Harold ſtill poſſeſſed ſufficient power to ſubdue this increaſing paſſion, let Meiners, the philoſopher, decide, who probably on ſome cold winter's day, ſat at his deſk in a room without a fire, and while, with the apathy

apathy of a ſtoic, he proved to us "that it was in every one's power to fall in love or not,"(2) forgot that the image of unhappy conſequences, which, according to his doctrine, we ought to paint to our ourſelves, never is ſo ſtrong and lively in our ſouls as the proſpect of bliſs, which we hope to enjoy in the poſſeſſion of the beloved object.

Harold did not ſubdue his paſſion, nor did he wiſh to ſubdue it. It was no longer love alone that tortured him, but luſt, ambition, envy, and vexation. He curſed Chance and Fate (two words which with him had but one meaning) for having caſt him ſo near the throne, and yet robbed him of the power to mount it.

"Was I aſked," ſaid he, "when I came into the world, what character I would aſſume? am I to blame becauſe my mother was not a peaſant's daughter? This burning thirſt for fame would then have been confined to the ſuperior cultivation of my little farm; more numerous herds, more productive land, more fruitful trees than thoſe of my neighbours would have been the height of Harold's wiſhes. Some good honeſt wench had ſhared my hard bed, and labour would have choaked the ſeeds of ambition, ſown by Nature in my reſtleſs ſoul. What am I now? A miſerable medium between dignity and meanneſs, a ſort of chief ſlave to the throne, a hanger-on to increaſe the ſplendour of the Court; a moſt obedient ſervant to receive the gueſts, and drink their healths. By Heaven, I will no longer

longer play this ſorry part! Thus, or thus ſhall it be! Flows not in my veins the ſame princely blood to which Theodoric is obliged for empire? Were not my anceſtors Kings? Is it my fault, that one of them was ſuch a fool as to make a voluntary reſignation of his crown, that he might retire to ſolitude, as he ſaid, to ſerve the Gods, or as his co-temporaries ſay, to lament his folly? Could he, by this renunciation, defraud his poſterity of their rights? No truly. Every throne is built upon the right of the ſtronger, though we pretend to fancy that we hold it by the grace of God. Give me a well-trained army, and a teeming treaſury—I'll prove my right to the dominion of half the globe."

Theſe principles ſoon gave birth to a ſcheme, which could only ſprout and ripen in a ſoul ſo baſe. The crafty villain knew full well that a feeling heart may know want even amidſt piles of wealth, and in the bittereſt poverty never can be truly wretched: Hence the infernal project, founded on Theodoric's fickle diſpoſition, to rob him of his peace of mind, together with his throne.

Meanwhile a year paſſed away in bliſsful uniformity. The eyes of Harold often ſpoke with a wild tenderneſs; Theodoric perceived it not, and Ildegerte ſeemed not to perceive it. She would not mortify the man who was her huſband's friend; ſhe would not, by diſdain, make him doubly feel the hardſhip of his lot. And woe be to you, Oh women! who diſmiſs the man with con-

tempt, that, without intending it, has ſwallowed poiſon from your charms. You have a thouſand other means, within the bounds which you yourſelves have choſen, to keep him at a reſpectful diſtance; you have a thouſand antidotes to cure him of his folly: but ſcorn and contempt betray a childiſh pride, and an unpoliſhed mind.

Ildegerte always acted with the mildneſs of the dove, and cunning of the ſerpent. She received the Prince at all times with a friendly cheerful air, and never courted or avoided an opportunity of being left alone with him. Whenever, on theſe occaſions, the converſation aſſumed by diſtant hints a dubious meaning, ſhe underſtood ſo well how to bend to the direct road, that ſhe often, without confuſion, checked the avowal, which already

floated on the Prince's lips. When he gazed at her with ſilent tenderneſs, ſhe never caſt her eyes upon the earth, but looked directly in his face with the mien of virtuous ſimplicity, which expects nothing criminal.

Harold was forced to confeſs that ſhe was not thus to be obtained, and that the look of artleſs innocence bound the ſeducer's tongue with heavier chains, than the oſtentatious virtue, which will have its merits acknowledged and reſpected.

The roſes now bloomed a ſecond time, ſince the happieſt couple in the North had aſcended the throne, when Ildegerte bore a ſon, the image of his mother. His firſt infantile ſmiles were a new and more powerful tie, the ſtrongeſt which Nature has woven

to

to bind tender hearts together. With a tear of joy, Theodoric received the dear pledge of love from the nurſe's hand. With the moſt affectionate ſolicitude, he ſat throughout the firſt nights at Ildegerte's bed, angry at every fly that dared to interrupt her ſlumbers. Town and country ſhared the father's happineſs, and hailed, with feſtive joy, the birth of the young prince. Harold alone ſaw in this boy the robber of a diadem, which, as he thought, was formed to grace his brow; and on the day that a whole nation formed the pleaſing hope of ſeeing the virtues of his father and mother flouriſh in young Haldan, (thus the Prince was called) he alone locked himſelf within his palace, under pretence of indiſpoſition, which hindered his appearance at Court; for he was wiſe enough to know, how great

would

would be the contraſt between his woeful viſage, and the general happineſs, as well as how dangerous to his ſchemes might be ſome courtier's eye, which had penetration enough to fathom the bottom of his heart. But while Court, town, and country paſſed ſeveral weeks in glad feſtivity, he did not ſpend his time in idleneſs.

At Canfried's death, the crown of Sweden devolved to Hermanfried, his brother, an impetuous youth, whoſe temper was eaſily rouſed, and who was only reſtrained from many an act of folly by his gentle ſiſter Luitgardis, yet ſcarce ſeventeen years of age. Long had he obſerved with jealous eye the increaſing power of Denmark; but the defeat of his brother, with whom fell the flower of Sweden's warriors, had reduced his

kingdom

kingdom to a ſtate of impotence, and for the preſent bound his hands. Harold became acquainted, through his ſpies, with this young monarch's views, and failed not as a malecontent to furniſh him with projects, which were eagerly caught at. He offered him his ſervices and aſſiſtance, repreſented Denmark as an eaſy conqueſt, and propoſed to accept the conquered crown as a fœdary to Sweden. He was lucky enough to perſuade Hermanfried, who now made preparations for attack, while Theodoric careleſsly repoſed in the lap of peace.

But you would deceive yourſelf, good reader, if you imagined that the villain's propoſals to Hermanfried were his real purpoſe; he only wiſhed to plunge his country into a difficulty, from which it could not be

be extricated but by a mighty blow, and this blow was to hit Theodoric's heart.

All being ſettled to his wiſh, he, one morning, with downcaſt look and clouded forehead, entered the King's chamber.

"I bring you bad news," commenced he.

"Well, thanks to Fate for it," anſwered the King. "He who is too happy, eaſily becomes preſumptuous. Let me hear it."

"Hermanfried, King of Sweden," rejoined he, "is arming againſt you."

"Is that all?" ſaid Theodoric.

"All,"

"All!" replied the Prince, "and enough as I think."

"I thought," proceeded the King, "the Swedes were ſtill ſufficiently employed in healing the wounds inflicted by my ſword, when Canfried reigned. At all events their rage is but the madneſs of a ſcarce recovered foe, who dares to cope with his ſound antagoniſt."

"Even were it ſo," returned Harold, "policy forbids us to deſpiſe a weaker foe. But my information is far different. Hermanfried, (as the ſpies whom I ſent out inform me), cannot brook the diſgrace ſuſtained by Sweden in his brother's reign. He is reſolved to waſh it away with blood, and conſcious of his own inability, has bound

to

to his intereſt the princes of Tartary, Novagorod, Tiver, Aſtracan, and Caſan, part of whom have joined him as zealous allies, and the reſt lent him their armies for a large ſum. It is likewiſe agreed among them, that the confederate troops ſhall be allowed to plunder, murder, rob, and raviſh through the vanquiſhed realms, that all the booty as well as your royal treaſure ſhall be ſhared among the Tartarian princes, and your ſubjects be doomed to wear their chains, Ildegerte alone excepted, whom Hermanfried, to avenge his brother's death, intends to be devoured, in ſight of his ſubjects, by wild beaſts."

"Arrogant wretch!" cried Theodoric; "he may force the way to her through my breaſt."

"And

"And will too," anſwered the Prince. "I confeſs that Harold trembles for the ſafety of your throne."

"Haſte then!" exclaimed the King. "Collect my whole force on the borders of Sweden; I myſelf will lead them to battle."

"Collect your whole force!" repeated Harold, ſhrugging his ſhoulders; "it amounts not to the tenth part of the armies combined againſt you. A conqueror, (as you well know) earns not his laurels without loſs. The defeat of Canfried coſt us many a hero's life. Many a hardy veteran was ſent to Valhall, and men do not grow like muſh-rooms."

"Give

"Give me your counsel then," rejoined Theodoric; "shall I avert the evil by my treasures?"

"A mode unworthy of you," said the Prince; "besides, (as may, without the gift of prophecy, be easily foreseen) of the worst consequences. It would betray our weakness, and Hermanfried will be revenged. His rage is not to be appeased by gold. I have already told you, he resigns the booty to the Tartars."

"Let us then seek allies," returned Theodoric.

"Where? whom?" demanded Harold.

"Among

"Among the German Princes," anſwered he.

"Oh! they live in eternal diſcord with each other," replied Harold. "There every petty Baron is an abſolute Prince, who, from the turrets of his caſtle bids defiance to the boors, and nouriſhes his wife and family by pillage and road-robberies."

"Well then, among the Britons," ſaid Theodoric.

"Yes," rejoined the Prince," if the danger did not already beat at your door. The Britons are at too great a diſtance, and what intereſt could they have in venturing their troops acroſs the ocean, to aſſiſt a foreign

foreign nation, with whom they never were allied?"

"Speak then!" cried the King, in a tone of diſtreſs, "What muſt I do? Sacrifice all to the fury of the foe without defence?"

Harold pauſed.

"Oh! why," proceeded he at length, "did Fate combine ſo many amiable qualities in Ildegerte, and refuſe her the title of a king's daughter?"

"Kinſman," returned Theodoric, "your ideas make ſtrange ſprings."

"Not

"Not at all," anſwered he; "they unite very naturally. Were Ildegerte the daughter or ſiſter of a mighty Prince we ſhould not be ſtanding here, and puzzling where to look for an alliance."

"True!" ſaid the King, ſtruck with the truth of the obſervation.

"And had not my kinder couſin ſcorned the counſel of ſtate policy," continued Harold, "he might now, by a tender tie, have founded the welfare of his ſubjects; he might, by a ſingle word, have cauſed the uplifted hand to ſink, and ſent the threatening falchion to its ſcabbard."

"And what may be this word?" aſked he.

"I

"I know from certain information," rejoined Harold, "that Hermanfried would not object, by a marriage between his ſiſter and the King of Denmark, to unite the Northern realms in friendly compact."

"His ſiſter!" repeated Theodoric, ſomewhat confuſed; "I ſcarce knew he had a ſiſter."

"A lovely girl," returned the villain, "who has ſcarce ſeen ſeventeen ſummers: Luitgardis is her name."

"Indeed!" anſwered the King. "And you can think that Canfried's brother (who, as you ſay, breathes nought but vengeance) would be willing to throw a girl, ſuch as you deſcribe

deſcribe Luitgardis to be, into the arms of his enemy?"

"I believe he would," anſwered Harold. "There is a certain anecdote in circulation at the Swediſh Court. Your picture (Heaven knows how) fell into the hands of the Princeſs; and, ſince that time, 'tis whiſpered the good creature often ſeems quite loſt in contemplation, courts ſolitude in ſhady groves, and has poſitively refuſed the hand of many a mighty prince. Nay, they even pretend to have heard from one of her attendants, that ſhe wears the much-loved picture ſet in diamonds near her heart, and often wets it with a tear."

Theodoric felt his vanity flattered.

"Were this true," replied he, "I ſhould pity her."

"Now you will eaſily perceive," continued Harold, "why Hermanfried, who loves his ſiſter moſt ſincerely, and to whom the ſufferings of her heart can be no ſecret, would renounce his thoughts of vengeance to ſee Luitgardis happy."

"Yes, plain enough," rejoined Theodoric, confuſed.

"Indeed," proceeded the Prince, "I have been privately given to underſtand—but I rejected it."

"Speak! what?" demanded the King.

"That

"That you might, in order to ſpare the effuſion of blood, and the deſolation of your kingdoms, marry Luitgardis."

"Abſurd idea!" exclaimed he, "How is it poſſible? Is not Ildegerte——?"

"True. That was my anſwer," ſaid the crafty villain. "But they pretended that the welfare of your ſtate might induce you to ſacrifice an individual for the public good."

"Never!" cried he.

"So I told them," replied Harold, "but they thought that you might ſweeten the ſeparation in a thouſand ways; that you might ſend her to her native country, eſta-

bliſh a Court for her under the title of Queen, and —— but how can I recollect all the nonſenſe they fabricated to make the ſcheme practicable?"

"No!" exclaimed Theodoric. "Rather will I die in miſery, I and my people."

"Harold, who now thought he had for this time done enough, as he plainly ſaw that the firſt ſpark, which he had careleſsly thrown, had already ſeized the cinders, that at the gloomy frown of diſcontent and perplexity lowered upon Theodoric's brow, left to time the taſk of blowing it into a blaze, and finiſhed the diſcourſe by once more maliciouſly deſcribing the miſery which inevitably threatened him, if he did not ſeize the

the only thread that could guide him out of the labyrinth.

"True it is," ſaid he, ſhrugging his ſhoulders, "it requires but a couple of eyes, (even if they cannot penetrate ſo very far into futurity) to perceive the iſſue of this bloody conteſt. You muſt deſcend from the throne of your forefathers, fly over the bodies of your ſubjects, and with difficulty ſave your life. But Ildegerte and your faithful Harold will every where accompany you. By the labour of our hands we will fertilize ſome deſert, and earn our daily morſel by the ſweat of the brow. And, when the ſpirits of the murdered Danes pour forth their curſes upon thee, when their blood cries for vengeance at the throne of Odin, Oh! may the infant Haldan's artleſs ſuppli-

cation bend the hearts of the Gods to thee again!"

With theſe words he left the weak Theodoric, in a perturbation which drove him to and fro like the crazy ſkiff upon the ſtormy main. Even the wreck of a world could not have moved him to an act of treachery, had the warmth of his affection been the ſame as that which had inſpired him on the field of battle; but it muſt be owned that unmoleſted enjoyment had damped his ardour. A calm eſteem, (if not altogether devoid of tenderneſs, yet conſcious of an undiſturbed poſſeſſion) was alone remaining in his breaſt. He already allowed himſelf many a little infidelity; he was able again to make compariſons between the charms of Ildegerte and of others; to be ſure

ſure he ſtill always found the former far ſuperior, but thought the latter worth enjoyment. In ſhort, he was a weak young man, without command over any of his paſſions, and ſtill leſs ſo, when the crafty Harold always knew how to encourage and to ſatisfy them! Who but muſt have obſerved how dexterouſly he attacked Theodoric's vanity? This mine was not the moſt ineffectual of all that he had ſprung. The gentle Luitgardis had never thought of falling in love with a picture. She was careleſsly roving from one youthful pleaſure to another, at the very moment that Theodoric fancied her wan, wretched, and ſinking under the ſorrows of an unhappy attachment.

A few days elapſed. The report of an approaching war ſpread far and wide. The

danger was magnified by Harold's inſtigation, and the fate of the kingdom repreſented as hanging by a thread. Wherever the King turned his eye, it caught ſome gloomy ill-foreboding look. The people groaned and wept. The rich buried their treaſures; the prieſts offered ſacrifice, and poured forth prayers both day and night.

In the midſt of theſe agonizing circumſtances, while Theodoric, with downcaſt head, was one morning meditating on his ſituation, his ſenators were announced. Bribed by the favourite in part with words, in part with gold, they threw themſelves at the feet of the King, and in the name of his miſerable ſubjects, claimed from him the deliverance of the ſtate.

"What

"What muſt, what can I do?" ſaid he. To convert ſtones into men is not in my power."

"Then you may at leaſt preſerve thoſe," replied the chief ſenator, "who are now alive, who till the earth, and are the kingdom's chief ſupport."

"What do ye want of me?" demanded Theodoric. "Is it I who wiſh to violate the peace?"

"No," anſwered the ſenator, "but you are he, who will not, by a trifling ſacrifice, ſecure it."

"What ſacrifice?" aſked he. "Name it."

"You know full well," rejoined the ſenator, "what price Hermanfried has ſet upon his friendſhip. He has fixed it as a dowry for his ſiſter."

"And call'ſt thou this a trifling ſacrifice?" returned Theodoric?"

"Trifling it is," ſaid he, "great as it may ſeem to you; trifling when compared with that far greater evil, which you will thereby avert. We ſtand here in the name of the people. We addreſs you not as father and as huſband! 'Tis the King to whom we fly for ſuccour. The peaſant prays for ſunſhine to uncloſe the ears of corn, even though here and there a bloſſom may be withered by the ſcorching beam."

"How!

"How!" cried he. "Could you vote for that noble being's baniſhment, to whom you ought to be grateful for an increaſe of your dignity?"

"'Tis this very gratitude," returned the ſenator, "which makes us cheriſh the fond hope that ſhe will not deſtroy her own good work. If the welfare of whole nations was the real motive of her glorious deeds, (and who among us dares to doubt it?) then may we certainly expect from Ildegerte's elevated mind, that ſhe will comply with the wiſhes of the people, ſeeking her reward in the bleſſings of a reſcued nation, and truly ſeeking not in vain."

What could be urged againſt all this? Theodoric, who already thought a ſepa-

ration from Ildegerte poſſible, who could reconcile this action to his fickle heart, by the ſpecious apology that he was but fulfilling the duties of a good king, and a father of his ſubjects; who had no fear of public cenſure, ſince the nation had itſelf required this ſacrifice; who could only dread the voice of conſcience, which he lulled at pleaſure, and the voice of ſuffering innocence, which, far removed, might echo through the woods of Norway, but never reach his ear.—— What could you expect from ſuch a man? Strange it is that it ſhould ſeem to coſt him any pain, ſtrange that he did not immediately conſent to all.

"Go, aſk the oracle. Its declaration ſhall be my deciſion."

With

With theſe words he left his ſenators, who, ſure of conqueſt, haſtened to the neighbouring temple, but too certain that the myſterious cloak, which ever ſhrouded the meaning of the oracle, would allow them to explain it as they pleaſed. After having placed a coſtly preſent on the altar, the prieſt began the ceremonies. His diſtorted countenance, his briſtling hair, his rolling eyes, and foaming mouth announced the preſence of the God. At length, inſpired by Odin, he addreſſed them thus:

"Before my eyes appear two Queens. This bears in her hand a ſword, and that a branch of palm. The ſerpent, which Theodoric cheriſhes in his boſom, ſhall be cruſhed by Ildegerte's foot."

With

With this unintelligible jargon, the ſenators contentedly departed.

"What can be more evident," ſaid one to the other, "than that the Godhead ſanctions our intentions? Two queens! How can there be two, if Luitgardis be not underſtood as one? She who bears the ſword is Ildegerte, becauſe ſhe gave occaſion to the ſtrife. She who bears the branch of palm is the Swediſh Princeſs, becauſe ſhe brings us golden peace."

The ſerpent in the King's boſom was the moſt knotty point to be explained, but even this they contrived to effect.

"The ſerpent," ſaid they, "ſignifies the ſtubborn oppoſition of Theodoric to the wiſhes

wiſhes of his people; and if Ildegerte willingly ſubmit to her fate, certainly ſhe may be ſaid to cruſh the ſerpent. Never ſurely was there a decree leſs capable of miſinterpretation. 'Tis clear to the meaneſt capacity. A child may diſcover the ſenſe ſo plainly conveyed."

Thus they cheerfully returned to the palace, and announced the fixed reſolves of Fate; to which the King had given his ſolemn promiſe that he would ſubmit.

"Who can oppoſe the Gods?" ſaid he, after a pauſe. "I am reſolved. I give my people peace, perhaps to be in everlaſting war with myſelf."

Harold wiſhed no more. Before the wavering

wavering King had leiſure to recant, ambaſſadors were with the utmoſt ſecrecy diſpatched to Sweden, to ſue for the hand of Luitgardis. They returned in a few weeks with the wiſhed-for anſwer, that, on this condition, Hermanfried was willing to conclude an agreement of eternal peace. Now the firſt ſtep was taken. To retreat would be ſtill more to exaſperate a formidable foe. Nothing therefore remained but to ſwim with the current. A ſecond embaſſy ſoon followed, veſted with full powers to ſettle the preliminaries of dowry and of jointure.

Who does not at once perceive the road which Harold was paving for himſelf by all theſe machinations? Ildegerte, incenſed to the utmoſt by treatment which, her proud heart will every moment whiſper to her, ſhe

ſo little merits; Ildegerte, robbed of her huſband, together with a throne, will thirſt for vengeance, will ſeek an inſtrument to execute it, and in the Prince will find what her galled ambition and her ſlighted love require. To wound this ambition and love beyond all power of cure, ſhe muſt be witneſs of her rival's triumph. For this purpoſe, he perſuaded the King, (who, ſince the irrevocable acquieſcence, had been whirled in a vortex of perpetual agony, and was eaſily perſuaded to do any thing) not to remove Ildegerte from the Court till Luitgardis was approaching the gates of his metropolis.

"For," ſaid he, "how eaſily may any unforeſeen event—a ſtorm for inſtance, or a ſudden illneſs, rob you of your bride; then would

would you lament the loſs of one, without finding comfort and conſolation in the other."

To all this Theodoric conſented. Unpleaſant things we are ever willing to defer, and ſtill was the thought of loſing Ildegerte painful to his heart. The arrival of the Princeſs too (if this parting were deferred till then), might diſſipate his ſorrows, which he never could expect to be the caſe, while left in ſolitude to the agonies of conſcience.

All therefore ripened according to Harold's wiſh, and he reſigned himſelf entirely to the flattering hope of ſhortly reaping the harveſt of his labours.

As

As yet Ildegerte had not learnt a ſyllable of the dark deſigns which an infernal villain was meditating againſt her peace. She reſigned herſelf entirely to the charming novelty of a mother's joys, and ſpent her time chiefly in playing with little Haldan as he ſat upon her lap, feaſting her eye and ear with the ſmile and liſp of infancy. The King was cautious not to interrupt her pleaſing dream of happineſs, and Harold had taken care to ſurround her by his creatures, that ſhe might have no ſuſpicion till a proper time. But now that he received intelligence of Luitgardis's approach, he thought it right at once to unveil the infamous deſign. He viſited Ildegerte, and contrived to mingle ſo much of the myſterious in his words and looks, to imitate ſo well the mien of confuſion which in vain attempts concealment,

that,

that, at laſt, the Queen could not forbear to aſk—

"Why ſo reſerved to-day, Prince? Whence the cloud which hangs upon your brow?"

"Venture not, Oh Queen! to break that cloud!" replied he ſignificantly: "A flaſh might dart from it which would annihilate you."

"Would you try," ſaid Ildegerte ſmiling, "whether I am but a woman to be frightened by mere words?"

"Words!" repeated he. "Yes, words, of which one would drive this ſmile of ſweet content for ever from your countenance."

"Then

"Then let me hear this one terrific word," anſwered ſhe. "You know that he who is acquainted with the full extent of his misfortunes, is far leſs to be pitied than he who ſtands in doubt upon the brink of an abyſs, the near approach to which he has been left to gueſs."

Here Harold ſeemed as if he tried in vain to ſpeak.

"No—impoſſible—not from my lips—pardon—I have no utterance for black ingratitude and perfidy."

"You make me uneaſy, Prince," rejoined Ildegerte. "What ſtroke of Fate can reach me in the arms of love? The King too has for ſeveral weeks ſeemed troubled and

and confuſed. Tell me what misfortune—Has Ildegerte unknowingly offended him?"

"How could Ildegerte!" exclaimed he, "the crown of womankind, afford melancholy a pretext to lower upon Theodoric's forehead? No. You have not offended him, yet will he doom the beſt of wives to miſery unutterable."

"Me!" cried Ildegerte. "Impoſſible!"

"But too true," returned Harold.—"Alas! Beauty, merit, and virtue muſt bind every heart in chains, but even beauty, merit, and virtue cannot hold the fickle libertine in ſilken bonds for ever. Inexpreſſible

preſſible are the ſervices you have rendered to the ſtate. Your amiable qualities are the admiration of a whole nation, and exalt you far above the crown you wear. Why was the firſt of mortals made a prey to the wanton levity of a voluptuous traitor?"

"Hold, Prince," interrupted ſhe.—"You go too far. Juſtify your words."

"You deſire it," anſwered he, "and I obey. Hear then, and comprehend (if with your good heart you can) a villany moſt diabolical. You were a Queen: forget that! I know you. Still will you remain a Queen, if not upon the throne, yet in the hearts of all who love you. You were a wife: forget that too! 'Twas all a dream. Awake. You are a mother: never forget that!

that! What has the guiltleſs ſuckling done, that he ſhould be robbed of his rightful inheritance by his father's infamy? Who will protect him, if his mother too forſake him?"

"Now by the golden ſhields of Odin,"(3) exclaimed Ildegerte, "never was oracle delivered in the groves of Aſgard (4) more obſcure. I was a Queen! I was a wife! When did I ceaſe to be ſo?"

"Since Theodoric," replied the Prince, glutted with bliſs, infernally reſolved to caſt you from his throne and bed. Since he ſent ambaſſadors to Hermanfried, to conclude an everlaſting union, and the knot which forms this union is Luitgardis, ſiſter of the King. Know you enough? Or will you

you drain the teeming cup of wormwood at a ſingle draught? Since he promiſed to ſend Ildegerte, to whom he is obliged for a kingdom—Ildegerte, the mother of his firſt-born ſon, an exile in diſgrace to Norway, but not till ſhe has witneſſed the triumphal coronation of her rival?"

Ildegerte——

But why need I deſcribe the broken accents of anger, aſtoniſhment, and indignation, the heavy ſighs of horror, diſcarded tenderneſs, and mortified affection? At the firſt moment, while her mind was unacquainted with a perfidy to which ſhe neither could nor would give credit; at the firſt moment ſuch an action ſeemed to her as monſtrous as to the poliſhed European the

account of people, who in cool blood raiſe their clubs to ſend their aged parents to the grave. She believed not the Prince's words; but Harold ſwore ſo ſolemnly, added ſo many cororborations, now pointing out to her the increaſing coldneſs of Theodoric, now the preparations at Court, which betrayed the approach of ſome great feſtival, (and which indeed had not eſcaped her eye, though they had too little occupied her exalted mind to force from her an inquiſitive queſtion) connecting proof to proof ſo artfully, and making her imperceptibly extract ſuſpicion from her huſband's every look, that he at length planted in her ſoul the dreadful certainty of her impending fate. The unhappy being riveted her eyes upon the earth, unable to ſhed a ſingle tear, or form a reſolution, and ſcarcely retaining her ſenſes.

ſenſes. This was the ſituation which Harold had awaited; upon this firſt ſtupor he had formed his plan.

" You perceive, Oh Queen!" proceeded the hypocrite, " that I am hazarding my life by diſcloſing to you a ſecret at which the King himſelf trembles. But long have you known how little I regard my happineſs and life, if Fate will but allow me to reſign them in your ſervice. Difficult it is to counteract Theodoric's infidelity, but not impoſſible. Rouſe your courage; I have many friends, and your Amazons are ready at the firſt ſignal to aſſiſt and to avenge you. Summon them to arms; graſp again the ſword which already has atchieved ſuch wonderous deeds; preſs on your head the helm of valiant Swend, (alas! he would

not thus have treated you!) redeem a crown for little Haldan, which by primogeniture is his; drive the villain, together with the creature for whoſe ſake he baniſhes an Ildegerte, drive them into deſerved miſery, and mount the throne. My arm, and a thouſand arms, at my command, are prepared to draw their ſabres in your cauſe. My voice ſhall be the ſignal for revolt. Beneath your banners ſhall Harold perform miracles, and at your ſide will he mount the throne, or die."

"No, Prince," replied ſhe. "Far be from me ſuch conduct. True it is, you ſee my tears, nor am I able to reſtrain them; but think not that they flow for the ideal loſs of a crown, which, in the intoxication of his tranſports, Theodoric once forced me

to accept: they flow for the loſs of a heart which was far dearer to me than the pomp of regal dignity; and if by arms I could recover this, what ſhould I thereby gain in his heart? No. I have no arms againſt Theodoric but my tears."

"Virtue overſtrained," ſaid Harold, "degenerates into a fault; you forget that we are not debating on you and on your rights. If you ſink to-day beneath your weakneſs, you are preparing for yourſelf the bittereſt reproaches from a ſon. His fortunes now depend on your's, and his rights they are, which (if you feel the ſacred impulſe of a mother's duties) you muſt defend by arms. Or, do you chuſe that he ſhould beg his life hereafter at the mercy of your rival's children?"

"You ſtorm my heart in vain," rejoined Ildegerte. "If Haldan do not inherit any throne from his mother, ſtill may he feel content in virtuous ſenſations, to plant which early in his boſom is the moſt ſacred of a mother's duties."

"Your ideas," anſwered Harold—"pardon me, beauteous Queen—your ideas have mounted to a better world, and you appear to have forgotten that you are ſtill an inhabitant of this our earth, on which they never can be realized. I leave you, for your preſent diſpoſition favours not the plan of cool, clear-ſighted judgment. I am convinced that the miſt, which ſeems to dim your eyes, will ſoon diſperſe. You will not bear the thought of being a mark for the deriſion of your rival. Till then, farewell," continued he,

he, ſeizing Ildegerte's hand, and tenderly preſſing it, "farewell! and reſt aſſured that Harold, whoſe fidelity has long been known to you, will hazard his life a thouſand times for a ſingle tender look from you."

He went, and left Ildegerte in a ſituation which my pen would in vain attempt to deſcribe. A copious flood of tears relieved her aching heart; ſhe threw herſelf into the arms of her faithful Helga, and was again able to weep and to complain.

"Fate then deſtined two powerful Kings to be my huſband, only that one might be torn from me ere I had poſſeſſed him, and that I might by the other be diſgracefully baniſhed, to lament in ſome lone deſert an

attachment, the firſt enjoyment of which I have ſo dearly bought."

A thouſand projects ſtarted in her brain. At one time ſhe reſolved to throw herſelf at Theodoric's feet, and ſue for his affection, or death by his hand. At another, ſhe determined to appear before him, with the dignity of injured virtue, to raiſe repentance in his boſom, and then to turn her back upon him with diſdain. But ſhe ever firmly rejected Helga's well-meant counſel, who with all her rhetoric ſupported Harold's plan.

"We can at leaſt," thought ſhe, "thereby affright the King, and from his fears obtain what his love denies."

"No,"

"No," ſaid Ildegerte, "I require juſtice from his heart. If it be denied at that tribunal, I will be ſilent till we ſtand before the Higheſt Judge. Then, then will Ildegerte——pardon him!"

"Be ſilent!" repeated Helga. "What, even when the arrogant deriſion of a triumphant rival rends your heart!"

"No, Helga," anſwered Ildegerte, "I will not be a witneſs of her triumph. She ſhall not feaſt upon my agonies, nor ſhall the King. I am reſolved. In my boſom will I hide the dreadful ſecret, and at Court, where all are liars, my countenance ſhall likewiſe be a liar. With a ſmile will I appear at table; with a ſmile will I preſent the cup, and wiſh good night to him. With

ſtedfaſt ſtep will I quit the ſaloon, diſguiſe myſelf in the habit of a ſlave, and fly of my own accord to Norway's woods, that on the day which crowns his ſecond love, he may at leaſt miſs the triumph of beholding Ildegerte's tears. Haſte, dear Helga! Mount my ſteed, take as much of my treaſures as ſeems needful to you; haſte to the ſea ſhore, and buy a veſſel, which may be ready at my ſignal to bear me from theſe hated ſhores back to my unpoliſhed country, there to dwell with far more poliſhed mortals."

By this reſolution ſhe abided, in deſpite of all the endeavours uſed by Helga to point out an eaſier remedy.

"You

"You try in vain," ſaid Ildegerte, "to deceive me thus with ſhadows. By what other means can I ſave myſelf from the diſgrace, and aſſert thoſe ſentiments which ever were my pride? Shall I at his feet implore his love? or am I, by a huſband's infidelity, juſtified in forgetting that this huſband is my King? No. Let him alone bear the whole burden of a tainted conſcience. Far be the wiſh from me to ſhare it with him! But thou, Helga, faithful companion of my happier youth, and of my ſhort-lived dignity, wilt thou too reſign the pleaſures of a Court to follow into miſery a baniſhed wretch?"

Helga wept upon her boſom, ſwore eternal friendſhip and fidelity, and haſtened to make inſtant preparations for the ſecret

flight. In a few days she returned to the Queen with the happy tidings, that in a bay which was surrounded by the wood, a vessel ready to sail awaited her command.

WEAK

WEAK Theodoric! thou wert not born to be a villain. The mine yielded not the iron in a dagger's ſhape, but hateful paſſions forged a dagger from it. Virtue has already left thy heart, yet is it leſs worthy of deteſtation than compaſſion. For what ſenſations had we given thee credit, if thy heart had ſtill remained a temple of virtue, combined with wiſdom and with love!

Do you ſee the reed ſhaken by the wind? Do you ſee him ſleepleſs, and envying the trabant, (5) who, ſupported by a quiet conſcience more than by his halberd, nods at the palace-gate? Round him refreſhing

ſleep

ſleep had rocked all nature to repoſe. He alone—the King, who fears no judge (that excepted who aſſerts the rights of virtue in his breaſt with unrelenting rigour) he alone rambles from room to room. The ſilken couch alleviates not the tortures of his conſcience; he gazes through the open window. Before him glitters the evening ſtar, which lighted once the flowery path of love when he conducted Ildegerte to the bridal chamber. Alas! then a tear of bliſs ſtood in the eye of the tranſported bridegroom, and the ſtar of love ſparkled therein with pleaſure. Now a cloud of ſad repentant tears hung heavily before his ſight; throughout his realms night was the ſignal of repoſe—to him alone the meſſenger of renovated torment. The Court, the chace, the tournament, no longer diſſipated care—all, all

was

was horror.—Oh Solitude! thou ſmiling friend of Wiſdom, how terrific art thou to the wicked!

Such a night it was, that, overpowered by his feelings, Theodoric ruſhed from his room, to follow the irreſiſtible impulſe of his heart, which drew him to Ildegerte. By chance, the trabant, who guarded the chamber of the King, had ſunk under fatigue, and did not even wake at the ſudden opening of the folding doors. It is difficult, during ſelf-ſuffering, to behold another's peace with pleaſure, and if the ſufferer be a King, he will generally become a tyrant.—The enraged Theodoric ſeized the trabant, and ſhook him violently. The wretch ſtaggered, rubbed his eyes, and by the glare of lamps, which burned in the hall of the

palace,

palace, beheld, with dread aſtoniſhment, the King before him.

"What!" cried the furious Theodoric, "dareſt thou then leave thy Monarch's life a prey to the firſt murderer, who is bold enough to creep under cover of darkneſs to his bed? Out of my ſight! thy life is forfeited! The riſing ſun ſhall not behold thee with the living!"

The trembling trabant fell upon his knees, and ſaid—

"Oh may the King hear me, and the man forgive me! I have a dear wife and ſeven young children; they daily call for bread, and, Sire, you know our allowance is but ſmall. Compelled by want, I bound myſelf

myſelf for three days' labour to ſupport my wife and little ones, and ploughed the earth for ſcanty wages. I returned from work laſt night weary, but with a ſack of bread; I ſatisfied my children, and expected to have ſlept in my wife's arms. But the lot, Oh King! fell upon me to guard your royal chamber. I was obliged to come, and having been at labour for three days, and known but little reſt, ſleep overpowered me. I have forfeited my life, but throw myſelf upon your clemency, not for the ſake of this ſcar earned in your ſervice; but Oh! have mercy on my wife! have mercy on my helpleſs children!"

"Thou happy man!" muttered the reſtleſs King between his teeth, "how willingly would I ſay to thee, let us exchange

ſituations.

ſituations. Come, throw thyſelf upon my ſilken couch; give me thy halberd, and in thy ſtead let me lean againſt the wall, ſinking to reſt with the ſweet conviction of having done my duty.—Riſe!" proceeded he aloud, "I pardon thee! Go to thy wife, I have no need of thee—I am the guardian of you all. Go home, and teach thy children to pray for their King."

He ſpoke, and wandered to the Queen's apartment with uncertain ſteps, tapped gently at the door, opened it with trembling hand, entered with tottering knees, and eyes which ſhunned the light. It was the very night that Ildegerte, for ever to eſcape the unmerited diſgrace, had determined to forſake the palace. She was reclining on a couch, with her face turned towards the window,

window, waiting for the riſing moon, in order, by the aſſiſtance of her light, to find the neighbouring bay, in which was concealed the ſhip that was to bear her from the coaſt of Denmark. At her feet ſat the faithful Helga; both were ſilent, both loſt in a labyrinth of ſorrowful reflections. Hark! Something was heard without the door! Now it ceaſed again—now it ſeemed to be retreating—now it returned, and the door was gently opened.

"The King!" cried Helga, ſtarting as ſhe recognized his features.

Fortunately a dim lamp caſt but faint rays upon the couch, and ſpread a kind of twilight over Ildegerte's glowing cheeks.—Theodoric too dared not to look at her, but riveting

riveting his eye upon the ground, obſerved not her confuſion.

"My huſband!" commenced ſhe, with a fearful dread that he had been apprized of her intention. "Whence ſo late at night?"

"Pardon me, my love," ſaid he, "a frightful dream has forced me from my bed. Methought as you were laying in my arms, you were torn from me; I wiſhed to reſcue you—I wiſhed to riſe, and haſten after you, but could not. I felt my arms confined by infrangible chains—I heard your lamentations and reproaches. I raged—I foamed, and yet the more I rouſed my ſtrength to burſt my fetters, the more, alas! was I confined by ſome inviſible power. I at laſt awoke: cold drops trickled from my fore-

head,

head; I ſprung from my bed, and haſtened hither?"

"'Twas but a dream," replied Ildegerte, "and ſuperſtition only ſeeks reality in ſhadows. How could you be thus alarmed? What can tear me from your arms as long as I am not torn from your heart?"

Theodoric only anſwered with a ſigh. He crept ſo affectionately into her arms, kiſſed her ſo tenderly, and talked to her ſo fervently, that Ildegerte, who thought it all hypocriſy and diabolical deceit, felt bitter ſorrow in her heart. It was painful to ſee herſelf mocked (as ſhe fancied) by the villain, whom with a ſingle word ſhe could unmaſk. She was ſilent, but unable to return the careſſes beſtowed upon her by the traitor

traitor as he hung upon her neck. The riſing moon reminded her of the intended flight. Ildegerte withdrew herſelf from the arms of her faithleſs huſband, feigned wearineſs, and begged repoſe. He went.—

Alas! then awoke in her recollection, as if by an electric ſhock, all the paſt joys of love. Before her eyes ſtood the proſpect of a drear futurity.

"Perhaps for the laſt time," thus whiſpered her heart to her, "perhaps for the laſt time thou ſeeſt the dear betrayer, the father of thy child."

She purſued him, threw her ſnow-white arms around him, and ſtammered forth—

"Fare-

"Farewell! Forgive me if I for another moment rob you of repoſe. I forgot to ſhow you the dear little child, the pledge of our affection."

With theſe words ſhe drew the King, (whoſe confuſion evidently increaſed) partly by force, to the cradle, in which the innocent was ſlumbering.

"Look!" ſaid ſhe, "here is your ſon. Kiſs him, and bleſs him, that with his father's bleſſing and his mother's love, he may bid defiance to the ſtorms which Fate perhaps has ſpread above him."

The King bent to his firſt-born ſon, and kiſſed him; a tear dropped upon his little hand

"For

"For the ſake of that tear," cried Ildegerte, "I forgive thee."

She vaniſhed in the inner apartment.—Theodoric was thunderſtruck; he followed her with fixed eye, and willingly had otherwiſe interpreted her words than his conſcience too plainly pointed out. Long he ſtood irreſolute. His heart drew him to Ildegerte's feet, there to confeſs his crime, and ſue to her affection for pardon. But then the demon Policy whiſpered in his ear—

"Too far haſt thou proceeded. Already does the ocean bear the Swediſh Princeſs to thy ſhores; thou canſt but proceed; to retreat a ſtep is war and death."

He

He turned mournfully around, reached his chamber without knowing how, and ſought that repoſe which is granted only to the good.

All was again ſilent. No footſtep echoed through the loneſome galleries of the vaulted palace. Ildegerte dried her tears, and demanded of her companion whether it was midnight.

"It is," anſwered ſhe. "All is quiet; above us ſhines the northern ſtar."

"'Tis well!" cried the Queen; "let us begone. Alas! how is my heart oppreſſed! Where is my ſon?"

"He's ſtill aſleep," ſaid Helga.

Ildegerte approached the cradle, and ſurveyed him with maternal affection.

" Look, Helga, how calmly innocence can ſleep. Is his father's reſt ſo undiſturbed? Oh! How eaſy is it to diſcover the traces of conſcience in the features of any one aſleep! When the weary eye is cloſed, the recollection of evil or of good ſteals from the deep receſſes of the heart, ſettles upon the countenance, and is manifeſt in convulſive motions, or a gentle ſmile. What a pity to diſturb the innocent's delightful dreams! But his mother has been rouſed by the hand of miſery from the moſt delightful of all dreams—the dream of love, and yet dare not complain. Away! I hear the crowing of the cock; away, before the morning dawns!"

Helga

Helga took the little ſlumberer in her arms, and he awoke not. Ildegerte with ſilent caution preceded her companion through the dark paſſages, and reached at laſt a little gate, which was opened to her by a trabant, bought over to her intereſt.—She caſt back another mournful look.

"This palace I entered in triumph," ſaid ſhe, "through yonder ſpacious portals, and am now doomed to fly from it like a criminal through this ſmall gate. At that time the ſun ſparkled in a tear of joy, but now the moon in the tear of miſery. Perfidious huſband! Away, that I may not curſe the recollection of him!"

She ſpoke, and took little Haldan in her arms, (for her affection could not even truſt

him to the faithful Helga), and carefully carried him now through pathleſs foreſts, now over craggy cliffs, and now over bottomleſs moraſſes. The night was cold, but large drops trickled from the heroine's forehead. Her face and hands were lacerated by the briars; her feet, wounded by the pointed flints, left their bloody marks imprinted in the ſand. Already had they been wandering for two hours, when the Queen aſked Helga whether ſhe was weary.

"I dare not tell a falſehood," replied ſhe; "I am very weary."

"True," ſaid Ildegerte; "you have no precious burden to ſcatter roſes on your path. Forgive me, faithful Helga."

"I am

"I am aſhamed," anſwered ſhe; "I'll follow you to death."

They continued their way. As yet they felt not the refreſhing ſea-breeze. The thickets grew more impenetrable, the path leſs beaten.

"Methinks," ſaid Helga, "the morning dawns. Do you ſee that purple ſtripe in the eaſt? Alas! what if the ſun betray us!"

"Courage! Courage!" exclaimed Ildegerte. "We ſhall eſcape; the night has led us too much to the left; at break of day we ſhall diſcern our road."

The fugitives, urged by anxiety, redoubled their efforts. They ſprung like kids from cliff to cliff; they crept like ſerpents through the interwoven buſhes. Panting like hunted deer, they forced their way through brooks and ſwampy fens.

At once a thick fog aroſe, which dimmed the breaking day, and ſpread a ſecond night around them, far more impenetrable than the former, which had been enlightened by the moon and ſtars. The unhappy Queen covered the child with all the garments ſhe could ſpare, in order to defend him from the chilly rawneſs of the atmoſphere. She ſummoned all her reſolution to oppoſe the horrors of her ſituation, and had ſtill a word of comfort left for Helga.

Alas

Alas! poor helpleſs wretches! What avails it that ye wander thus, beſmeared with blood, in tears, and breathleſs? Do you know whither you are flying? Can you diſcern the tree cloſe to you? Are you certain that ſome hoſtile demon is not leading you through this labyrinth back to the Palace gate? Perhaps at that very moment the ſun-beams may diſperſe the fog, exhibiting your mangled perſons to the deriſion of the Court and Hell.

"Oh Queen!" cried Helga, falling on a ſtone, "forgive me, I can go no further."

"Ye Gods! this is too much," cried Ildegerte. "Burden me not, Odin, beyond what I am able to bear. Collect this

miſt into a thunder-cloud, and launch the dart of Hela to my heart."

She threw herſelf upon the damp cold earth, cloſe to her friend, preſſed little Haldan feebly to her boſom, and warmed him with her tears.

The flood-gates of Heaven opened.—Forth guſhed a torrent from the ſkies, accompanied by hail; the brooks were ſwoln beyond their banks, and the fields inundated; the miſerable fugitives were completely drenched. Rapid ſtreams rolled paſt them, and in huge drops a river ſeemed to fall from every tree.

Haldan (who till now had ſlept as ſoundly in his mother's arms beneath the canopy of angry Heaven,

Heaven, as on a bed of down in the palace of his father,) awoke, as at laſt the rain, in ſpite of Ildegerte's care, had forced its way. He awoke, and availed himſelf of the only arms which Nature (bounteous to every beaſt, to man alone penurious) had granted him. He cried ſo loudly and piteouſly that his voice rent the heart of his afflicted mother, more than the thorns her feet and hands. Fruitleſs were her careſſes, fruitleſs the offer of her breaſt, in which miſery had dried all nouriſhment. At laſt her courage, her belief in a Providence, who ſuperintends the ſufferings of innocence, forſook her; mad with deſpair and anguiſh, ſhe wrung her hands, and curſed her exiſtence.

Hark!

In the thickets barked a dog—not far diſtant ſeemed the ſound; freſh life, hope, and ſtrength, inſpired the weary Queen.—She ſprung nimbly on her feet, ſtretched forth her hand to her exhauſted friend, raiſed her, commanded her to lean upon her arm, removed with her left hand the cloſe-cemented buſhes, claſped with her right the infant Haldan, and thus followed the ſound, which ſtill ſeemed nearer and nearer.

Suddenly ſhe ſtood before a ſmall hut, which, overſhadowed by thick interwoven branches, bade defiance to every ſtorm.

"I ſhall find ſome one here," ſaid ſhe to herſelf, "whoſe compaſſion I ſhall excite by the artleſs account of my diſtreſſes. But if not, be my laſt reſource—this dagger."

Thus prepared for all, Ildegerte boldly knocked at the door of the little hut. But who can deſcribe her aſtoniſhment, when a female voice called from within—

"Hail, Queen of Denmark and Norway! Enter! Enter! Come to my fire, thou, Prince Haldan, and the faithful Helga."

At once the door flew from its hinges, and our heroine beheld ſitting, at a blazing fire, a decrepit old woman, who, with palſied head, tottered towards her, ſeized her hand, and conducted her to a kind of couch, made of ſoft moſs and twiſted ſedge. With benevolent ſolicitude ſhe took the little Prince from her arms, laid him near the fire upon a bed of roſes and ſweet-ſcented herbs, went to milk her goats, and appeaſed

his hunger. She then brought fruits and bread, with a cordial drink made by herſelf of honey and berries; at the ſame time ſhe encouraged her gueſts by friendly converſation, preſſing them to partake of her homely cheer, and not to deſpiſe her poverty, for ſhe gave them what her little garden and cellar would allow.

"When you," ſaid ſhe, "are recovered from the hardſhips you have encountered in the night, I will conduct you, by the neareſt road, to the ſea-ſhore. To be ſure, 'tis long ſince I forſook my hut, for age and infirmity are ſiſters; but to-day, by the aſſiſtance of my ſtick, I will contrive to hobble along, for I think it well worth my trouble to ſacrifice the remnant of my ſtrength in the aſſiſtance of ſo good a Queen. Fear not;

not; you will not be purſued; the ſhip lies unobſerved within a ſecret bay, the wind is fair, and ere the ſun has half-fulfilled his courſe, the coaſt of Denmark will have vaniſhed from your view."

The good Queen ſtared at her with aſtoniſhment, not knowing how to ſolve the myſtery. The old woman ſeemed as well acquainted with her every ſecret as if ſhe had been the companion of her youth, and never left her ſide.

"Who art thou, unaccountable?" ſtammered Ildegerte in a tone of ſuſpicion; "who art thou, before whoſe eye the book of Fate lies open?"

"I

"I am," replied ſhe, "Suanhilda, the ſorcereſs, whoſe name perhaps has reached your ears."

A ſacred reverential impulſe ſeized the Queen. She had often heard at her huſband's Court of this miraculous woman, of her wonderous ſkill in magic and divination. But an inſtant before ſhe had been convinced that Fame had not exaggerated it. It would have been folly to conceal her ſecret from ſuch a favourite of the Gods: ſhe therefore wiſely determined to reveal to the old woman what the latter long had known, and implore her aſſiſtance.

Suanhilda promiſed, and fulfilled her promiſe; for as ſoon as the wanderers had dried their clothes, healed their wounds, and

ſatisfied

ſatisfied their hunger, ſhe graſped her ſtaff, and led her gueſts (as quick as the weight of a hundred years, which ſhe bore upon her back, would allow) by a ſmooth path, known only to herſelf, to the ſea-ſhore, where the crew joyfully hailed their freight, and a briſk breeze ſwelled the canvas. The ſun, no longer hid by clouds, now ſparkled in the rippling waves. Suanhilda embraced Ildegerte.

" Farewell," ſaid ſhe, with an awful ſolemnity, while ſhe gazed full in the heroine's face, and a more than mortal inſpiration overſpread her features; " farewell, till thou and thy thouſands are borne upon the ocean back to the coaſt of Denmark, where the deſolated fields imbibe the grateful dew of Heaven, mingled with floods of gore, where

where the wretched peaſant groans to thee for help and for deliverance, where Treaſon ſpreads its ſooty pinions o'er the Palace.—Welcome, Oh heroine, amid the ſhouts of multitudes! Triumph and conquer, thrice bleſſed mother of kings! Thy name ſhall be named in diſtant ages, and behold! thy children's children paſs before me, clad in purple, bearing the ſceptre of Norway, which is decorated with the ever-blooming trophies, earned by Ildegerte."

The old woman, from a hillock near the ſhore, ſtill continued her prophetic bleſſings, when a large ſpace ſeparated Ildegerte from that land, which, by her baniſhment, plunged itſelf into deſtruction.

The

The voyage was proſperous, the weather favourable. In a few days the heroine reached her native ſhores, and fled to the caſtle in the woods, which had before heard her lamentations for the loſs of Thora, and concealed her anguiſh for the death of Swend.

BACK to the palace of the poor deluded King, where (to borrow a ſimile from Monteſquieu) all is lifeleſs animation, and every one a walking ſtatue!

Scarce had Theodoric awoke from a ſhort ſlumber, which had rather wearied than refreſhed him, when he was informed that one of the Queen's attendants waited in the anti-chamber, and deſired admittance.

"Let her come," ſaid he, affrighted, and foreboding ſomething unuſual. The crimſon flew into his face, he half-raiſed himſelf from his couch, and leaning on his elbow, fixed his eye upon the door.

With

With downcaſt looks, Ingibert, (the ſiſter of our Helga) entered the apartment.—She was clothed in mourning, and from her head flowed the long crape to her feet.—Her uneven pace, her mute affliction, more appalled the King than if ſhe had wrung her hands in agony, and torn her hair. She approached him with reverence, and ſilently preſented a letter. Theodoric opened it with trembling hand, and read. Ingibert withdrew.

Ildegerte to Theodoric, King of Denmark and Norway.

"Your generoſity (you termed it love) once forced me to accept a crown from your hand, while my armour ſtill was ſtained with Swediſh gore. In martial accoutre-

ments

ments I pleaſed you—in the modeſt attire of a houſewife I ceaſed to pleaſe you. The blood of Canfried led me to the throne, the blood of Canfried drives me from it; your enemies and mine may triumph, but far am I from demeaning myſelf ſo far as to reproach their daſtard ſouls. Take back the diadem, which ambition never placed upon my brow; I lay it voluntarily at your feet, to eſcape the inſult which ſo undeſervedly awaited me. The rank to which you raiſed me, has not extinguiſhed the recollection of that to which I ſhall return. Let no lamentation follow me; my heart will feel no want but your's, which I have loſt. Live happy and content, if the ſituation in which I leave you can afford content and happineſs. I haſten to the woods of Norway, there to ſeek that peace which I never felt upon your throne.

throne. If you now and then can ſtill beſtow a thought upon me, without an interruption to the pleaſures of your new alliance, keep in mind that I never ſhall forget you are the father of my child."

I leave it to your imagination, reader, to depict the impreſſion which this ſolemn adieu made upon his heart, ſtormed as it was on every ſide. You know he was no villain, though his weakneſs, his too eaſy flexibility led him to commit more crimes than Harold, with all his villany, could perpetrate. At this moment all his tenderneſs awoke; he again beheld in Ildegerte his amiable wife, the mother of his ſon.—He again reflected on her exalted virtues, and unmerited diſtreſſes; he reſolved to act like a man, and wept like a child. He determined

termined boldly to ſurmount all the obſtacles of policy, but, inſtead of inſtantly executing what the angel of Virtue whiſpered, to make Harold firſt acquainted with this alteration in his ſentiments. The favourite was ſummoned.

"Read, Harold, read!" reaching with trembling hand the open letter. Read! give me thy advice, and calm, if poſſible, the tumult which rages in my heart."

Harold took the paper, and peruſed it.—The flight of Ildegerte was to him a thunderbolt, which blaſted at one blow his brighteſt hopes. Yet could the eye of one, endowed with a knowledge of mankind, read likewiſe in the generous renunciation which theſe lines conveyed, the ſureſt method to regain

Theodoric's

Theodoric's wavering heart. This muſt be prevented; diſſimulation was more neceſſary now than ever. Harold with difficulty tried to force a ſmile, cloſed the letter, thruſt it in his boſom, and aſſuming an air of indifference, demanded—

"What does the King intend to do?"

"What he muſt do," replied Theodoric, "if he will obey the dictates of his heart; what he muſt do, if he will lay claim to a title far above that of King—the title of an upright man."

"But there is a wide difference," ſaid the Prince, "between an upright King and an upright individual. The latter can by no means be concerned in our preſent deliberation;

beration; the former muſt not conſult his heart, but the opinion of the nation."

"And of his own accord linger all his life upon the rock of conſcience?" cried Theodoric.

"If he will ſuffer his imagination," anſwered Harold, "to bind him to the rock, why, yes."

"Sorry I am, then," rejoined the King, "that I am a ſlave to mine. Spare your words; ſend a ſmall veſſel inſtantly to Norway for her; ſend an ambaſſador inſtantly to Sweden. I will not ſee the Princeſs, I will not hear her name again."

"The

"The hoſtile army," replied Harold, "will bellow it loudly enough in your ears. What ambaſſador can I ſend? Who of all your ſubjects will ſtep forward to be torn in pieces by juſt exaſperation? Hermanfried would rave, Luitgardis with her tears inſpire each arm. Every noble Swede would rather die a thouſand deaths than ſuffer ſuch an inſult to be unrevenged. Already do I ſee them burſt upon us like fragments of broken rocks; already do I ſee them deſolate thy fertile kingdom, butcher thy ſubjects, and enſlave their children; already do I hear thy faithful followers curſe thy weakneſs, which drags them thus to ſlaughter for a woman's ſake. The welfare of the ſtate is your firſt law; this Ildegerte herſelf confeſſes by her voluntary reſignation; you ſhould be obliged to her for having made the ſtep

more eaſy, which coſts your heart, as I perceive, ſo much."

"Alas!" exclaimed Theodoric, "what muſt become of her? Is ſhe doomed, as a reward for all her love and valour, only to hunt the bears in Norway's foreſts?"

"Not ſo," anſwered Harold. "You may, by a thouſand little favours, alleviate her lot. Let her retain, as heretofore, the title of Queen, that will flatter her ambition. Let her have a conſiderable revenue, that will procure the conveniences of life."

"But her heart——?" ſaid the King.

"That," replied the Prince, "will be more open to a mother's joys, more cloſely connected

connected to her ſon, and will find its reward in the reflection of having contributed to the happineſs of a whole nation."

"And I—?" proceeded Theodoric, with a deep ſigh.

"To that queſtion," anſwered he, preſenting a miniature, "let the original of this reply.

"What is it?" cried the King, eagerly.

"The beauteous copy of a ſtill more beauteous girl," ſaid Harold.

"And the original?" demanded he.

"I dare not name," returned Harold; "you have forbidden it."

"Luitgardis?" aſked he, impatiently.

"The ſame," ſaid the Prince.

Theodoric riveted his eye upon the picture.

"She is handſome."—A pauſe.—"Beautiful!"—Another pauſe—"Enchanting!"

"And yet," rejoined Harold, "'tis thought the painter has but ill ſucceeded in the expreſſion of that gentle ſoul which animates theſe features. He was unable to ſteal from her that ſmile, which ſhe ſeems to have ſtolen from the goddeſs Freya."

"Who

"Who brought it?" aſked Theodoric.

"A meſſenger," returned the Prince, "who, at the ſame time, announces the near approach of the Princeſs. He reports that, at his departure from the Court, ſhe purpoſed to remain but three days longer, and as he has been by accident detained upon the road, he expects her to be cloſe behind him."

"So ſoon?" cried Theodoric. "Before we are prepared for her reception?"

"Heed not that," ſaid the villain; "only prepare your heart, and to your faithful Harold leave the reſt."

"Haſte then!" exclaimed the King.—"Let no decoration or magnificence be wanting. Fame deſcribes her brother's Court as ſplendid; I ſhould not wiſh her to miſs here what cuſtom may have rendered requiſite."

"Every coſtly ornament," ſaid Harold, "which your royal treaſure can procure, ſhe ſhall find in her apartments. Add to this," continued he, in a jocular tone, "the value which ſuch a preſent gains from your hand, and methinks Luitgardis will be ſatisfied."

The Prince was now going, when Theodoric detained him, by aſking for the letter.

"It

"It were better, kinſman," rejoined Harold, "not to read it a ſecond time."

"It at leaſt deſerves an anſwer," obſerved the King."

"It does," returned Harold," and I adviſe you to accompany it with preſents. Fail not alſo to call her Queen, and command the nobles who take it to bend the knee, as is meet when they approach the conſort of their King."

"And to convince her, by irreſiſtible eloquence," proceeded Theodoric, fixing his eye upon the picture, "of the ſad neceſſity which obliges me, ſo contrary to the wiſhes of my faithful heart—"

"And ſo forth," interrupted Harold.—"Yes, yes; but allow me to ſtate another doubt which has occurred to me. If I am wrong, my zeal for your ſafety muſt ſerve as my excuſe. Would it not be conformable to the dictates of caution, if you were to ſtation a few troops on the confines of Norway?"

"Why ſo?" demanded he.

"How eaſily," ſaid Harold—"pardon me, 'tis but a ſuppoſition, yet is it founded on a knowledge of the ſex, which, when ſlighted, ever thirſts for vengeance—how if Ildegerte, who in her native land has powerful intereſt, were to excite your ſubjects to revolt?"

"Peace!"

"Peace!" cried the King. "Her noble ſoul cannot be capable of ſuch a thought."

"Of what cannot the ſtorm of paſſions make a woman capable?" anſwered he.—"Who ever yet repented caution? And, why is it neceſſary that the purpoſe for which your troops are ſent thither ſhould be known?"

"No," exclaimed the King, "it cannot be. I'll hear no more; not a ſingle man ſhall approach the borders, and thoſe at preſent ſcattered in that diſtrict, ſhall immediately return, that Ildegerte may not think me guilty of harbouring the leaſt ſuſpicion."

"As you pleaſe," concluded Harold, "I have but done my duty."

The hypocrite departed. His deluded friend, (who had ſo often ſacrificed the ſubſtance for the ſhadow) ſought conſolation in the picture of the Swediſh princeſs, and tried, by gazing at her lovely features, to drive from his remembrance the tear which perhaps at that moment trickled down the cheek of Ildegerte. He convinced himſelf that he had done every thing which love and generoſity demanded. Had he been but a ſubject, reaſoned he, no power on earth ſhould have forced him to loſe Ildegerte; he would have fled with her to a deſert; wild herbs would, at her ſide, have been luxuries, and water nectar. But Fate had placed him in a ſtation which we mortals are for ever painting

painting the moſt arduous and unenviable, which, however, not one in a thouſand voluntarily quits, and which none of us, who thus deſpiſe it, would refuſe, if it were offered. What remains to be done? He has but two alternatives; he muſt either audaciouſly oppoſe the will of the Gods, and the intreaties of his ſubjects, or caſt away the purple, and retire to Norway's woods, there to die poor and unknown, yet at the ſide of Ildegerte. The firſt no mortal dares to do, the latter he muſt not; for to leave a flock without a ſhepherd would be cruelty, and to rob his heirs of their paternal right would be madneſs.

Thus the ſophiſt quietly ſubmits to his deſtiny, writes a luke-warm letter full of forced apologies to Ildegerte, tries to make

amends by coſtly preſents for what the ſtyle may want in affection, and wonders when ſhe ſends the preſents back, nor deigns to write him a reply. He terms her conduct haughty, thinks he has a right to talk of undeſerved injuries, and feels a ſecret joy in having found another cover for his perfidy.

Well is it for the villain, who can thus rock his conſcience to repoſe. Even Theodoric envies him, for he is not always able thus to impoſe upon himſelf by ſophiſtry.

A THOUSAND times has it been ſaid, (and falſely ſaid) that the path of ſeduction is only ſtrewed with roſes. True it is, the further one advances, the more eaſy ſeems the way, the more numerous theſe ſhort-lived flowers. This, however, is not at the beginning of the road, but where it deviates from the path of Virtue. There has Virtue ſcattered many a thorn, which, from time to time, benevolently tears the thoughtleſs wanderer's foot, to make him attentive to the way which he is chuſing.

Luitgardis came. On every ſide triumphal arches were erected. The ſtreets were adorned with branches, the windows decked with

with garlands, and each clad in his beſt attire. A magnificent proceſſion paraded in honour of the feſtive day, but the countenances of the aſſembled multitude gave the lie to their garments; no joyful ſhout ſaluted the young couple; all was ſilent as if a funeral were paſſing, and Theodoric, at the ſide of Luitgardis, felt the bittereſt mortification. He commanded meat and bread, as well as intoxicating liquors, to be given to the populace. All refuſed to taſte them, and crowded to the temple of Odin, where, ſince the laſt battle, Ildegerte had hung her lance and helmet, which they bedewed with tears.

Theodoric heard it, and his heart bled.

All ſeemed to combine on this day to plant a thouſand daggers in his heart. Sir Siegwin,

Siegwin, an old Swede, (the ſame who conveyed the body of Canfried from the field of battle, and ſlew Swend's murderer) came in the ſuite of Luitgardis to deliver the young Princeſs to the King; but ſcarce had he performed this errand, ere he ſprung upon his ſteed to return home.

"Whither ſo ſoon?" cried the aſtoniſhed King. "Will you affront me ſo much as to refuſe the cup of joy upon the day of my nuptials?"

"Sir," ſaid old Siegwin, do you remember our interchange of friendſhip on the field of battle? My King commanded me to accompany the Princeſs; I have delivered her to you. My friendſhip I take back."

Without

Without waiting a reply he ſpurred his ſteed, and vaniſhed from the ſight of the abaſhed Theodoric, whoſe conſcience loudly called to him—

"Thou deſerveſt not the friendſhip of ſo worthy a man."

Thus did the viperous tooth of Conſcience gnaw every morſel that he ate, taint every drop he drank, and poiſon every kiſs he imprinted on the lips of his bride.

"And Luitgardis? Oh! ſhe was a good harmleſs being, ever gay and ever happy.—She ſaw no further than it was wiſhed ſhe ſhould ſee, and enjoyed the pleaſures of the preſent hour, regardleſs of the next.

And

And Harold? 'Tis time to return to him, whoſe well-concerted plan had been defeated by the flight of Ildegerte, and whom you perhaps fancy contented with the thought of having ſo completely revenged his ſlighted love, and reſolved calmly to enjoy the fruits of this revenge. Nothing leſs. Harold (like a ſkilful cheſs-player, who always knows how to give another turn to his game, when a movement of his adverſary has defeated his firſt plan) now aimed at the throne of his forefathers (as he termed it), even without the help of Sweden. He had not a moment's doubt but that his hand would be accepted, when he had it in his power to make the offer from a throne. Notwithſtanding all his craft and knowledge of mankind, he ſometimes fell into the ſame miſtake as attaches to the reſt of us poor mortals.—

He

He attributed to each character unintentionally ſome mixture of his own, by which miſtake it came to paſs, that as he laid down falſe poſitions, falſe conſequences enſued. He could as little fancy the patient and ſubmiſſive Ildegerte, as the Greeks a Juno, without jealouſy.

"Let me but be a King," was his falſe argument, "and ſhe will be ready enough to ſnatch at any opportunity of convincing Theodoric that ſhe can be a Queen in ſpite of him."

ALMIGHYY

ALMIGHTY Ruler of creation! Is it not enough that an audacious deſpot ſhall be able to deſtroy that noble emulation, the axis upon which all republican ſtates turn, and ſubſtitute his mad ambition? Muſt even Love, that gentle child of Heaven, formed only for the conſolation of ſuffering humanity, afford him a pretext?

Already was Harold, the favourite, poſſeſſed of a blind confidence, lord over the revenues of the kingdom, lord over the ſtrongeſt forts, lord over the army; for he had ever contrived to remove from the throne the faithful and deſerving patriot, and to ſupply the place by a creature devoted

to

to his will. And who can deny that Theodoric aſſiſted the traitor in his projects? Had he not loſt the love of his people by baniſhing their idol, Ildegerte? What had he been ſince that time, but a mark for their deriſion and contempt? Alas! but too eaſy acceſs did Harold find to their hearts. He complained with the diſcontented, plotted with the diſaffected, and, in a ſhort time, beheld himſelf at the head of a powerful party, who eagerly awaited the ſignal for revolt. Nothing was wanting but a favourable opportunity, and the demon of diſcord failed not to provide it.

Theodoric, in the poſſeſſion of a lovely wife, a double crown, an unmoleſted peace, was wretched; for the joys of the bridal bed, the grandeur of the diadem, the ſmile of peace

peace ſtilled not the voice of his accuſer, Conſcience. He avoided himſelf, and the whole world; he launched eagerly into every diſſipation; he endeavoured to forget the paſt amid the noiſy buſtle of the Court. In vain, in vain! An irkſome diſguſt attended him, even to the arms of the beauteous Luitgardis. The ſociety of each contemptible court minion ſoon became indiſpenſible, becauſe his ſhallow brain could daily hammer forth new means of diſſipation.

Harold availed himſelf of this ſtate of mind, and, by one of his partiſans, cauſed the King to fall upon the idea of making a tour through his realms.

"Excellent!

"Excellent! Excellent!" cried the cheated monarch. "We ſhall be daily amuſed by new objects, we ſhall hear the petitions of the diſtant provinces. Quick! make inſtant preparations, that the pleaſant ſeaſon may not paſs."

His impatience was beyond all bounds; every delay intolerable; not a hand was there in the palace unemployed. In a few days he left the metropolis, having appointed Prince Harold the unlimited Regent during his abſence.

This was the moment which the favourite had awaited. He daily received meſſengers from the King, announcing the continuance of his journey; and ſcarce did he know him far enough advanced towards the confines,

when he at once threw away the maſk, aſſembled his creatures round him, took the young Queen into cuſtody, overpowered the few who were faithful to Theodoric, and was joyfully hailed by the infatuated populace, King of Denmark.

He mounted the throne with affected modeſty, heard and determined every cauſe in perſon, repealed ſome taxes which were heavy on the people, doubled the allowance of the army, ſacrificed to the Gods, gifted the prieſts, amuſed the vulgar by a few hired jugglers, publiſhed a plauſible manifeſto, indiſputably proving his right to the throne, and thus ſecured his booty without oppoſition.

Indiſſolubly,

Indiſſolubly, as he thought, was the knot of power now tied; and on the ſummit of his grandeur he felt no other wiſh than the gratification of his luſt. He ſeized the pen, and wrote—

Harold, King of Denmark, to Queen Ildegerte.

"You are revenged, fair Ildegerte! Theodoric is puniſhed—Harold King. The perfidious villain has releaſed you from your oath; haſte, Oh haſte, to form another union. Come and reign wherever Harold reigns."

A ſplendid embaſſy was diſpatched to Norway to deliver this letter, and to convey

Ildegerte

Ildegerte triumphant to the coaſt of Denmark.

Immoveable, as if ſtruck by Odin's thunderbolt, ſtood the weak Theodoric, on hearing the dreadful tidings brought by a faithful fugitive. Long his tongue refuſed its office, and the firſt exclamation that quivered on his lips, was—

"Oh Ildegerte, Ildegerte! This have I for thy ſake merited. Can the wretch who betrayed his own wife, complain of a friend's perfidy?"

Extend, good reader, your compaſſion to the miſerable outcaſt, for, at this moment, he ceaſes to deſerve you hate; behold and pity his deſperate ſituation. See where

the Court-ſycophants ſteal away, to throw themſelves in the ſhadow of a more fruitful tree; for this, lopped of its leaves, ſtands naked and defenceleſs. Forſaken by his friends and ſubjects, without an army, without money, without counſel, huſband of two wives, and unable to ſeek comfort in the boſom of either—this is the image of the wretch, who, torn by a thouſand agonies, extinguiſhes the indignation which his weakneſs had excited in our hearts.

He wandered from city to city—the gates were ſhut to him; he fled from village to village—ſcarce did ſome honeſt peaſant ſhare with him his morſel of coarſe bread.

Thus did he ſteal through a thouſand dangers to the remoteſt province of his kingdom,

kingdom, the only one ſtill faithful to him. Here he collected a band of a few thouſands, headed them, and boldly marched againſt the robber of his crown; but as he dared not hope for victory, he reſolved in deſpair to ruſh upon the ſword of the foe, and finiſh his miſerable being on the field of battle.

Harold laughed at his temerity, braced on his armour, aſſembled his innumerable troops, headed them, and fiercely ſallied forth to complete the ſubjection of the kingdom, and chain his rival to the triumphal carriage, which was to bear him and Ildegerte to the altar of Siofna. He daily expected the return of the ambaſſadors from Norway, and was at a loſs to account for their long ſtay. But he conſoled himſelf with the idea, that when all had ſubmitted

to the victor, he might reſt the more eaſy in the arms of love.

Meanwhile the two armies (if Theodoric's ſmall band deſerve the name of army) had approached each other. Theodoric wiſhed for battle, Harold avoided it; not becauſe he had the ſmalleſt doubt of a deciſive victory, but he would take the rebels (as he termed them) alive, ſurround them by ſuperior force, and compel them, by famine, to ſurrender their ſhadow of a King. Every thing ſeemed to favour this project. In a barren valley, devoid of water, the inconſiderate King had pitched his tents. Every avenue was poſſeſſed by the enemy. Bread began to fail, and the burning thirſt of the loyal troops was quenched only by the dew of Heaven. A few excurſions were hazarded; each

each time the little band returned diminiſhed. The people murmured, and conſidered themſelves as ſheep led to ſlaughter.—The impulſe of ſelf-preſervation awoke, and eaſily overpowered the enthuſiaſtic idea of an unalterable allegiance to their ſovereign. Harold daily ſent diſguiſed impoſtors to the camp, who offered pardon to all the wavering, if they would voluntarily ſurrender, and deliver their King into his power.

"Why this delay?" ſaid they. "Your brethren have yielded to the conqueror, and are happy. The new King is gracious; he will be a father to you; but beware how you provoke his wrath. Can you think, with a handful of men, to oppoſe hunger, thirſt, and an innumerable army? Harold could long ſince have annihilated your poor band,

had he not pitied your infatuation, and wiſhed to ſpare the blood of his ſubjects, (for as ſuch he ſtill conſiders you). Seize and kiſs the hand which a father offers, ere you too late repent your obſtinacy."

Theſe addreſſes naturally made a deep impreſſion on the minds of thoſe who heard them. They combined, and determined to offer the ſacrifice required, in order to ſave themſelves from inevitable ruin.

Thus helpleſs was the ſituation of poor Theodoric. The deſign of his followers was not unknown to him, and each moment he expected to be dragged in chains before the traitor, whom he had once loaded with kindneſſes. This idea was to him inſupportable. Once more his courage awoke:

"Rather

"Rather die than increaſe Harold's triumph." Thus ſpoke he to himſelf, and prepared a cup of poiſon, which he was juſt about to ſwallow, when Eſcill entered his tent. He announced a woman, who, with a baſket of fruit, had ſtolen through the enemy, and deſired to ſpeak with him.—Scarce had he finiſhed, when the woman entered.

"Helga!" cried the King. "Art thou here? Is it poſſible?"

Helga ſilently greeted him, and delivered a letter.

Ildegerte to Theodoric, King of Denmark and Norway.

"This moment I have landed, on the coaſt of Denmark, ſix thouſand Amazons and eight thouſand hardy Norwegians. I haſten to relieve you; I ſhall reach you in a few days. When our warlike ſhouts announce our approach, burſt from your camp, ruſh boldly on the uſurper's front, while I attack him on the rear. My life and blood are your's."

"God of Heaven!" exclaimed Theoric, while a flood of tears guſhed down his face, and not knowing what he did, he claſped the faithful Helga in his arms. "Is it not a dream? So much generoſity! So unmerited!

unmerited! How ſhall I dare to meet the injured angel, whom I have ſo baſely——"

"Of that we muſt not now converſe," ſaid Helga. "Pardon me, Sir, "you have too often ſacrificed the preſent to the future. Do you underſtand and approve of Ildegerte's letter?"

"Perfectly," anſwered he, "and will follow her directions punctually."

"Then I have fulfilled my errand," rejoined Helga. "Farewell!"

"But another word," cried the King.—How happens this? How did my diſtreſſes reach her ear!"

"Our enemy was ſo kind," returned ſhe, "as to honour us with a confidence, which we might have expected from you. But, to be brief, (for my time is ſhort) your worthy kinſman, Prince Harold, had for ſome time caſt an eye of affection upon Ildegerte, and having it in his power to add to the allurements of his perſon, the allurements of a throne, (whether acquired by birth or uſurpation is to him alike) he ventured (unhappily for him rather too ſoon) to make a formal offer of his hand by embaſſy. What followed is eaſily divined. The worthy ambaſſadors were confined, that the uſurper might remain in a ſtate of uncertainty; a ſmall army was haſtily collected; a favourable breeze wafted us acroſs the ſea, and here we are with you to conquer or to die."

The

The good King could not check his tears, or bear this ſudden change of fortune.

"Tell her," cried he, "that ſhe has ſaved an ungrateful wretch from death and infamy, that this cup of poiſon had already touched my lips."

He was ſtill ſobbing and moaning to Helga, long after ſhe had left the tent.—She ſtole with her baſket through the hoſtile camp, mounted the nimble ſteed that awaited her among the thickets, and haſtened to Ildegerte, who, in the meantime, had advanced a day's march at the head of her Norwegians. The re-animated King immediately convened the leaders of his little army, and announced to them the joyful news, which quickly ſpread from tent to

tent, appeaſing hunger and diſaffection, inſpiring every heart with courage, every arm with ſtrength, every breaſt with loyalty, and every eye with martial fire. "Ildegerte!" was the general cry. A cheerful buſtle pervaded the camp. Helmets were poliſhed, ſwords were ſharpened, and hymns of victory ſung by anticipation. Upon the ſummit of the neighbouring mountain a centinel was ſtationed, to ſtrike his ſhield thrice as ſoon as he eſpied the approaching army. Every one wiſhed to relieve this guard, for every one was eager to announce the happy tidings.

Harold heard with aſtoniſhment the ſhouts of joy in the valley, from whence the air till now had wafted to him nought but groans. A ſpy came to acquaint him with the

the threatened ſtroke. He was furious, and reſolved at break of the ſucceeding morning, to ſtorm the narrow valley, and deſtroy the paltry band, that when Ildegerte came, ſhe might find the work already finiſhed, and return diſappointed to the woods of Norway. He reſolved—but the Gods had otherwiſe reſolved.

The ſun declined, and his firſt beams already kiſſed the ocean, when the guard upon the mountain thrice ſtruck his ſhield. Every one climbed to the ſummit, and with ſilent rapture ſaw the numerous troops emerge from a cloud of duſt, ſpread in thick ranks acroſs the plain, and pitch their tents at a ſmall diſtance from the tyrant's camp.

Harold

Harold foamed with rage, and vowed the death of the audacious woman. 'Twas not fear that cauſed him thus to knit his brow, to fix his eye upon the earth, to gnaſh his teeth, and clench his fiſt. What had Harold to fear? Ildegerte's army, joined to Theodoric's weak exhauſted band, equalled not half his force, and half of Ildegerte's followers were women. Fear it was not, but his deſpiſed affection, which converted his deſire to deteſtation, drove his boiling blood into his head, and forced from him an oath to exterminate the daring creature, together with her beardleſs train.

With eyes that darted fire, he left his tent to prepare his troops for battle on the enſuing morning. But, alas! what a ſudden change! Shallow blockhead! Couldſt thou think

think the name of Ildegerte was forgotten by the Danes?

"Who are they that approach?" ſaid one to another? Are they friends or foes?"

Soon was it proclaimed:

"'Tis Ildegerte, our Queen, the valiant noble being! Who dares to lift his hand againſt her? If ſhe defends Theodoric, Theodoric is right, and we are rebels.—Away to her feet! Let us appeaſe the heroine's wrath by voluntary ſubmiſſion."

And ſee! Here and there a troop forſook its leader. The deſerters every moment increaſed; every moment increaſed the ſhouts of

"Long live Queen Ildegerte!"

One

One dragged away another; hundreds followed without knowing why or whither. They plucked green branches from the trees as a token of pacific diſpoſition, laid their arms at the feet of Ildegerte's guard (which at firſt attempted to oppoſe them) crowded with acclamations to the camp, and demanded a ſight of the Queen.

Ildegerte iſſued from her tent with an air of majeſtic dignity. The multitude fell upon their knees, bleſſed their Queen, and ſued for pardon. The heroine waved her hand. A death-like ſilence reigned throughout the aſſembly, and anxious expectation ſat upon every countenance.

"I thank

"I thank you," ſaid ſhe, "for this mark of your attachment. My heart feels its value, and, as a female, I may be allowed without reſtraint to ſhed the tear which you ſee trembling in my eye. But I have nothing to forgive. 'Tis your King whom you have injured; 'tis your King, at whoſe feet you muſt try by ſupplication to avert the ſword of Juſtice. All I can promiſe is, to join my prayers to your's. Go, unite yourſelves to my followers, and wait with reſignation the approaching morn. The riſing ſun will diſpel the enchantment which till now has bound your ſenſes."

She ceaſed, and the ſtill-increaſing multitude reſpectfully obeyed her words. The camp was too ſmall to contain all that arrived. They paſſed the night beneath the ſtarry

ſtarry heavens, anxiouſly ſighing for the break of day.

The ſun roſe, and Ildegerte in vain looked for an enemy. Notwithſtanding Harold's furious menaces, notwithſtanding the examples of a hundred, whom he with his own hand ſlew, as they were flying, his mighty army every inſtant leſſened. When he turned to the left, the right wing fled, and while in purſuit of this, the left forſook him. At laſt he remained alone and in deſpair. Too daſtardly to throw himſelf upon his ſword, he eſcaped through the darkneſs of night to the ſea-ſhore, embarked on board a fiſherman's ſkiff, fled to Germany, and in ſome miſerable hamlet hid his diſgrace and remorſe. No one purſued him. In a few years, exhauſted by the horrors of conſcience,

conſcience, he deſcended to the horrors of Niflheim.

Ildegerte mournfully returned thanks to the God of war for the victory obtained without a blow, and was informed, as ſhe departed from the altar, of Theodoric's near approach, who, with his band of faithful followers, had already left the valley, and was coming towards her through the enemy's deſerted camp. She haſtened to receive him.

But what Divinity inſpires me to deſcribe this meeting? Theodoric ſprung from his charger, threw himſelf at Ildegerte's feet, and writhed in the duſt. He was bathed in tears, and his ſobs choaked his utterance.—Ildegerte raiſed him, and in a gentle voice beſought him to forget the paſt, and to forgive

give the rebels. She conducted him into her pavilion, to hide from the gazing multitude the confuſion of their Monarch.

What a triumph for the baniſhed Queen, to replace a crown upon the head of her ungrateful huſband, to make him feel, in ſpite of his injuſtice, how great was her influence in the hearts of his ſubjects!

Joyfully the army now approached the metropolis. All the gates were open to receive them—every heart beat friendly towards them. Luitgardis was releaſed, affectionately embraced by Ildegerte, and mortified by no reproach, or ſcornful look. Eaſy it is to imagine the perplexity of poor Theodoric. He loved Ildegerte more than ever. The army adored her; the heart of every

every Dane was her's; the whole Court hung with reverence upon her looks: The idea of her being mother to a guiltleſs child, diveſted of his rights, added an affecting portion of compaſſion to reſpect and love.—No one doubted, after all ſhe had done for the nation, that ſhe would demand, and receive the moſt honourable reſtoration to the dignities of which ſhe had unjuſtly been deprived. The King was willing from his heart to make reparation for his crime, and Luitgardis, (though ſhe trembled at the thought) could not deny that Ildegerte was worthy of the preference. In this ſurmiſe the nation was confirmed, when Ildegerte ſummoned an aſſembly of all the eſtates, for the purpoſe of publicly addreſſing them. The day was fixed for this ſolemnity, and awaited with anxious curioſity by every

every Dane. During the intervening period, various were the opinions of the points which were to be the ſubject of the Queen's harangue.

If you wiſh to be a witneſs, reader, of this ſolemn ſcene, follow me. I will conduct you to a hill, from whence you may ſurvey the whole.

The morning dawned. The beams of the riſing ſun ſhed a cheerful luſtre on the plain, which, decked with innumerable flowers, ſtretched to an immeaſurable diſtance.

Look! There, where the far horizon cheats the ſight with a dark-blue ſhade, there riſes to the clouds a towering wood of firs.

firs. To the right, a rivulet glides ſoftly over the pebbles, in whoſe murmuring waves ten thouſand diamonds ſeem to ſparkle. To the left riſes a mountain awfully majeſtic, whoſe ſummit oft is crowned with clouds, and which oft derides the thunder roaring at its baſe. To-day, however, it is clear, and bears the altar, from which the curling ſmoke ſpires into the air. The prieſt, who, on his knees, with ſacred hand is nouriſhing the flame, ſeems at that height a dwarf.

But what thus glitters like the ſun, in the centre of the plain? What dazzling mixture this, of gold and gorgeous colours?

'Tis the King's throne, to which are five ſteps, covered with ſcarlet ſilk. The hangings

ings are of embroidered gold, which, drawn at the ſides into feſtoons, diſplay the lofty ivory ſeat ingeniouſly worked. There lies upon a ſatin cuſhion the reſplendent crown, ſtudded with precious ſtones; near it the golden ſceptre. A hundred feathers, purple, white, and pearl-coloured, nod from the canopy with gentle motion to the ſeat.

But what thus glitters like the moon on each ſide of the throne?

The thrones of the two Queens, to which are three ſteps covered with blue ſilk. The ſeats are ſmaller, gilt, and carved in divers places. The canopies are of embroidered ſilver, upon which a plume of blue feathers here and there is wafted by the zephyrs.

But,

But, what theſe diſtant warlike ſounds that ſtrike the ear?

They are the drums and horns, the flutes, the cymbals, and the trumpets (which with a ſolemn march precede the grand proceſſion), mixed with the people's ſhouts, who preſs round the King's triumphal carriage. At his right hand ſits, with burniſhed armour, and with open helm, the heroine Ildegerte. Upon her brow reigns the conſciouſneſs of mighty deeds, and in her looks glows a majeſtic dignity. At his left hand ſits, in the ſnow-white robe of innocence, the gentle Luitgardis, with dejected mien and prophetic dread of her future deſtiny. See what innumerable multitudes ruſh through the gates! See how they ſpread along the road, crowd to the carriage, cut the traces, and

drag, with ſhouts of joy, their much-loved burden.

The magnificent proceſſion now approaches. Firſt come, with drawn ſwords, ſix thouſand Amazons, headed by the faithful Helga, who nimbly ſeparate, and ſurround their Monarch's throne. They are followed by the triumphal muſcle-formed carriage, bearing the royal group, (6) attended by trabants, men, women, and children. Now come the nobles of the land, the eſtates of Denmark and of Norway, the Knights, the Leaders, and the Senators. Each heads, according to his dignity or wealth, a larger or ſmaller troop of warlike vaſſals, 'ſquires, armour-bearers, attendants. The train is endleſs.

But

But ſee! The King has already mounted his throne. Ildegerte has taken the ſeat on his right, and Luitgardis on his left. The different eſtates of the kingdom occupy the ſteps of the thrones.

Four heralds blow the trumpet, and command reſpectful ſilence. Inſtantly all is ſtill as if a God had deprived a million of exiſtence. No one dares to breathe, or quit the place, where Chance has fixed him. Thoſe who are behind, riſe on the tip-toe, ſtaring with eager looks over the heads and ſhoulders of the crowd before them.

Then aroſe Ildegerte from her ſeat with lofty dignity, and thus addreſſed the aſſembly:—

" Mighty King of Denmark and Norway, my lord and huſband—ye nobles of the realm and countleſs multitude, whoſe looks hang on my words with anxious expectation, think not that, by my petition and Theodoric's command, you are aſſembled here to witneſs any deed which will leſſen the value of my heart. The unmerited affliction which I have endured, has neither damped my ſpirit, nor diminiſhed the upright ſenſations of my ſoul. Far be it from Ildegerte, therefore, to ſeek the reſtoration of her happineſs in the miſery of the innocent. I come not to require that ſtation, which the King's affection once beſtowed upon me. His will and your's have deemed it expedient, for the welfare of the ſtate, to unite the Northern kingdoms by this gentle tie, thereby to avert bloodſhed and diviſion.

I revere

I revere your wiſdom, I wiſh not to cloud the fountains of private peace and unanimity, whoſe waters fertilize theſe realms. I acknowledge Luitgardis not to be my Queen, but your's. May ſhe love Theodoric as I loved, as I ſtill love him! Ildegerte will be her ſiſter, not her rival. For myſelf therefore I have nothing to beg. Beg, did I ſay? Ildegerte never begs; for what the moſt holy laws of heaven and earth allot to her, ſhe demands. I demand of you, ye eſtates of both the kingdoms, that you reſtore to the child what your King has wreſted from the mother, that my ſon never may have cauſe to recollect my baniſhment. Acknowledge loudly and openly—Prince Haldan is Theodoric's eldeſt ſon."

"He is! he is!" reſounded from all ſides.

"Speak then!" continued ſhe; "Where is he to look for his inheritance?"

"He is heir to both the kingdoms," cried the people.

"I thank you," ſaid Ildegerte. "And you, Theodoric," proceeded ſhe, ſinking on one knee, "do you ſanction what your eſtates ſo loudly decree?"

The good King, (who, to-day, was literally but the ſhadow of a King, and who, toſſing on his ivory throne from ſide to ſide, read in the looks of his ſubjects that they thought him but a man, who knew not the difference between gold and ſilver) ſtooped bluſhing to the heroine, and raiſed her in his arms.

"Am

"Am I not obliged to you," ſaid he, for this my crown, this my ſceptre, and the happieſt hours of my exiſtence? Is not your ſon alſo mine? Do you aſk a ſinner this only to confuſe him?"

"Enough!" cried Ildegerte. "Now, modeſt Luitgardis, your conſent alone is wanting."

The gentle being, from whoſe mild blue eyes the tears had long been falling on her throbbing boſom, roſe, and threw herſelf at Ildegerte's feet.

"Oh inimitable woman! allow me to attempt a copy of your virtues. Take back the place from which I innocently drove you—it belongs to you alone. Let me in

retirement merit but the title of your friend."

"Not ſo," rejoined the heroine. "You are the Queen, you are and ſhall remain ſo. As a wife, I have renounced every claim; I have only ſpoken as a mother, that my ſon, by being interwoven in my deſtiny, might not curſe my weakneſs. I ſtand here to open the gates of honour, which have been ſhut to him by my diſgrace. Declare!"

Luitgardis turned to the crowd.

"Liſten to me, Oh ye people! Let my weak voice reach your ears. And thou, all-ſeeing Vara, goddeſs of pure vows, avenger of perjury, thee do I call to witneſs, that I here acknowledge Prince Haldan to be the only

only lawful heir to both the Northern crowns; and ſhould Siofna bleſs my bed, curſed be the child who wantonly dares to break his mother's oath!"

A murmur of applauſe pervaded the multitude.

"Have you," demanded Ildegerte, well conſidered the nature of this oath? Do you know the force of maternal love? What will you leave your children?"

"A grateful heart," ſaid ſhe. "Will they not even be obliged to you for their exiſtence?"

"Good woman," cried the heroine, "you deſerve more than it is in my power to

to give. To rob your children of both crowns, in order to place them on the head of mine, were no longer maternal love, but rather an unbridled luſt of power. Heaven grant my ſon ſtrength to bear but one, as may become an upright Monarch! 'Tis the diadem of Norway I demand for him; let Denmark's ſceptre remain in the hands of your children."

This conteſt between two virtuous ſouls drew tears from a million eyes. Ildegerte and Luitgardis were alternate objects of love and admiration. Every one wiſhed to give all to both, for both deſerved more than all that could be given. But as Ildegerte inſiſted on the generous renunciation of the Daniſh crown, the eſtates of both kingdoms unanimouſly reſolved that Prince Haldan be

be eſtabliſhed and henceforth conſidered King of Norway, and in caſe of the royal iſſue being extinct in either of the kingdoms, that the crown devolve upon the neighbouring Monarch.

Ildegerte had required nothing for herſelf; but every heart leaned towards her, and wiſhed to extinguiſh in her boſom the remembrance of her undeſerved afflictions.—Ildegerte (thus decreed the eſtates) ſhall bear, during her life, the title of Queen of Norway, and deliverer of Denmark. She ſhall take her ſtation upon feſtivals at the King's right hand. She ſhall reign in Norway, during the minority of her ſon, as ſhe reigns in the hearts of its inhabitants, and a monument of braſs ſhall record her deeds to poſterity.

In

In the heroine's eye quivered a tear of bliſs. She bowed to the multitude, and a thouſand voices raiſed her name with joyful ſhouts to the habitation of the Gods.

Loud ſounded the trumpets, cymbals, drums, and horns, but louder the glad cry of

"Long live Queen Ildegerte!"

A happy banquet followed the ſolemnities. In a thouſand decorated tents the teeming horn went round. The gay couples winded through the mazy dance, and the riſing ſun beheld the intoxicated ſlumberers ſtretched upon the dewy graſs.

But

But already does maternal love hurry Ildegerte to the ſtrand; already does the ſhip unmoor which is to bear the heroine to her native ſhores. But another embrace, another parting tear, another ſad adieu, and—the rowers daſh through the foaming waves, the pendants wanton in the air, a freſh breeze ſwells the canvas, and already is the coaſt hidden in the miſt. All is now loſt, except the loud bleſſings of the affected multitude, which are borne upon the wings of the wind to Ildegerte's ear.

NO more has my feeble pen to relate of this illuſtrious heroine. She was a Thora, and tried to make her ſon a Swend. But that ſhe was not immortal, and that, weary of life, ſhe too at laſt ſlept in the arms of Hela, is betrayed by the cypreſs, which hangs on the lyre of her Scald.

NOTES.

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(1) FREDERIC the Second, King of Denmark, when ſometimes tired of court-formality, uſed to ſay—

"The King's from home."

In a moment every one gave way to uncontrolled amuſements; but as ſoon as Frederic exclaimed—

"The King's returned,"

The whole Court was at once reinſtated within the bounds of etiquette.

(2) For the attempt to explain this abſurd doctrine, ſee Meiner's fantaſtic publication, entitled, "Vermiſchte Philoſophiſche Schriften."

(3) & (4) Golden ſhields of Odin and Aſgard. See note 22.

(5) Trabant, the name given to the yeomen of the guard in the Northern Courts.

(6) Literally the royal trefoil.

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